

different meaning. We tramped the marsh, which teemed with other bird life, backwards and forwards. Twice we flushed a mallard from a nest well filled with eggs. One nest, with a clutch of ten, was downed almost as thickly as an eider duck's, with a well-trampled path like a miniature sheep walk leading from it to the water's edge. From behind a stock of reed-sheafs we watched for ten minutes a pair of teal playing together — unobserved, as they supposed — in a rushy pond close by. Shovellers, with fantastic coloring and great flat beaks out of all proportion to the size of the bird, rose more than once within a few yards of us, and after circling once or twice, pitched again not far off. Tired-looking swallows sat disconsolately in parties of five or six on bushes, or rose to skim over the water in a half-hearted way, and light again.

A pair of redshanks crossed us once or twice, flying in line, one just behind the other, whistling loudly as they flew. Cuckoos called, and overhead snipe poised themselves, drumming and bleating and dropped like stones as they neared the ground. In the nest of one of them we saw a beautiful instance of "protective coloring," the marvel of which never loses its freshness. The keeper the day before our visit, had found the nest, and for our benefit had marked the spot. It was in a line between two bushes, within half a dozen yards of one which stood alone and unmistakable on flat ground, with nothing on it bigger than a few short sprits which could hide the nest. As we neared the spot, the bird, to show there could be no mistake in the mark, rose close by us. For more than a quarter of an hour we looked, — three pairs of eyes, one pair the keeper's, — crossing and recrossing every foot of the ground, and were giving up the search as hopeless, thinking that a crow perhaps had hunted the marsh in the early morning before us, when in the middle of a tussock of sprits at our feet we saw a maltese cross of very green eggs, mottled irregularly with brownish-red, exactly imitating the bed of green moss from which the sprits grew. The color of snipes' and many other eggs is very volatile, and no one who has only seen them "blown" in a cabinet can quite realize their beauty when seen in the nest, fresh laid and untouched.

At intervals of our tramp on shore we took the boat, rowing across corners of the broad, or pushing our way through ditches or narrow twisting channels. We saw coots' nests in plenty, and one unfinished nest of the great crested grebe, — the one rare bird which has made some return for the trouble taken of late years for its preservation by becoming more common. A floating mass of weeds, fished up, wringing wet, from the top of the water, looks a hopeless nest for a bird to hatch her eggs in; but, like a damp hay-stack, it generates very considerable heat. "In a grebe's nest," writes Mr. Southwell in the third volume of "Stevenson's Birds of Norfolk," just published, "in which were three eggs and a newly hatched young one, the thermometer rose to 73°, showing that the nest, so far from being the cold and uncomfortable structure by some supposed, was a real hotbed. On inserting the thermometer into a beautifully neat and dry coot's nest, which the bird had just left, I found the temperature to be 61°. The day was wet and cheerless, and the maximum reading of the thermometer in the shade was 58°."

We saw through our glasses several crested grebes playing on the broad. Oddly enough, the common little grebe — the "dabchick" — is less plentiful in Norfolk than it is in St. James's Park, where last year as many as six pairs, all wild birds, nested and brought off their broods.

For six or seven pleasant hours we hunted marsh and broad with eyes and ears open. But not once did we catch sight of a feather, nor once hear the silvery "ping" of the note, of the bearded tit.

It was, of course, one corner only of a wide district, over the whole of which the bird has been well known, that we had explored. There are other broads and marshes where local circumstances may have tempered the killing wind. There, while we looked for them in vain, busy parents may have been working hard from morning till night to cater for the wants of hungry families safely hidden in daily thickening growths of bog flowers and grasses, and another year the deserted reed-beds we visited may be repeopled.

But as we drove home the conviction forced itself more and more strongly upon us, that, from one at least of its most favored haunts, the bearded tit has disappeared, and that it is not improbable that very soon — perhaps before this year is over — naturalists may be telling the sad story of the extinction of one more English bird.

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

\*.\* Correspondents are requested to be as brief as possible. The writer's name is in all cases required as proof of good faith.

On request, twenty copies of the number containing his communication will be furnished free to any correspondent.

The editor will be glad to publish any queries consonant with the character of the journal.

#### Atmospheric and Seismic Influences.

In your issue of May 1, I had the honor of reporting a coincidence in time between two peculiar phenomena, the first the collapse of the fire-area of Halemaumau in the crater of Kilauea on March 5, and the second an unprecedented fall of the mercury in Honolulu to 48° F., on March 4. I remarked that this was perhaps not a mere coincidence. I now have the satisfaction of reporting a third phenomenon occurring at the same time, which is undoubtedly connected with the second, and which may aid in finding a connection with the first.

By the return from the Caroline Islands of the missionary barkentine "Morning Star," on the 19th of June, we get word of a severe hurricane on Strong's Island, or Kusaie, on the 3d, 4th, and 5th of March (or 2d, 3d, and 4th here). This island is in about 5° north latitude, and 162° east longitude, or about 3 400 miles west of Honolulu. Most of the breadfruit and coconut trees were uprooted, and a majority of the houses destroyed. The force of the waves threw up an islet, half a mile long and five feet high, on the outer edge of the fringing reef. The severity of the blow was from the north east. No barometer was observed there. No gale was experienced at other islands, so far as heard from. There was a sudden fall of the barometer at Honolulu on the 2d of March (3d at Kusaie).

The atmospheric change here is readily connected with the disturbance at Kusaie. To show a connection of the latter with a disturbance of the earth's crust on Hawaii is not quite so easy, although I believe that coincidences between hurricanes and earthquakes are common. What happened on Hawaii was a subterranean fracture in the lava duct of Kilauea, which let its contents escape and apparently become distributed under the Kau desert to the south-west, where lively earthquakes occurred. I suggest that a common cause of the atmospheric and the seismic disturbances is to be sought for in astronomical conjunctions, possibly connected with sun-spots. Account should probably be taken of the severe blizzard of March 10, in England.

SERENO E. BISHOP.

Honolulu, June 30.

#### The Collections of the Late Professor Parker, F.R.S.

In a letter recently received by the undersigned from Professor W. Newton Parker, F.Z.S., of the University College of Cardiff, Wales, a son of the late eminent Wm. Kitchen Parker, the vertebrate morphologist, I am informed by its writer that "My father's executors have decided to sell the greater part of his collection, which includes numerous skeletons (mainly of birds) and a large number of slides of *Foraminifera*, etc. Do you think that any of the public institutions in America would be likely to want any of these? . . . I hope you will forgive my troubling you about this matter, and I only venture to do so knowing you to have been a friend of my father's, who has an interest in him and his work."

The late Professor Parker's labors in comparative morphology for almost the last half century are so very widely known to science the world over that it is quite unnecessary for me to dwell upon them in the present connection. Their results, as published in the proceedings and transactions of the various learned societies of Europe since 1857, have long become in the highest degree classical, and they are as standard as they are imperishable.